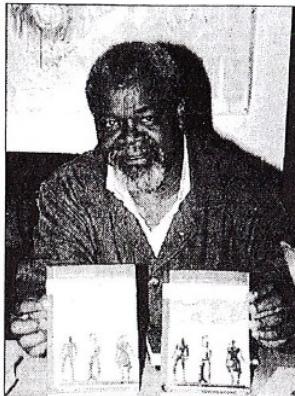


New books donated to National Library of Aruba examine the Curaçao Slave Uprising of 1795



Charles do Rego (L) with Mirto Lacle



Joe Gumbs



Curaçao, which was a center for the slave trade for centuries, was also the sight of a major slave uprising in 1795, following similar events in Haiti. Tula, the leader of this rebellion, was the property of the Plantation Kenepa, or Knip, owned by Shon Caspar Lodewijk van Uytrecht. It was from that site he and fellow leader Bastiaan Carpata began their fight against enslavement, traveling from plantation to plantation, freeing fellow slaves and gathering followers.

Curaçao commemorates this historic event each year on August 17, the anniversary of this famous insurrection, with festivities, and this year, two books - in Dutch and English - have been published recounting the historic events of that day, and author and historian Charles do Rego, along with Ed Gumbs of Ninsee Publishing, are on Aruba to present copies to Biblioteca Nacional tonight at 7:30. The presentations will be accompanied by a program focused on Afro/Caribbean culture, and the screening of the film, "The Legend of Buchi Fil."

The famous Curaçao uprising began at the plantation in Bandabou early in the morning of August 17, 1795, when Tula and Bastiaan, popularly called as "Carpata," with many others, informed van Uytrecht they would be slaves no more. He told them to take their complaints to the

lieutenant governor at Fort Amsterdam. They made their way to Lagun, where they freed 22 imprisoned slaves, then to the sugar plantation of Sint Kruis, where they were joined by more rebels.

The escaped slaves continued from farm to farm, amassing an army. Slave owners had retreated to the city, leaving their plantations unattended, and a French slave, Louis Mercier, joined forces with Tula and Carpata to return to Sint Kruis and Landhuis Knip to acquire weapons and free the remainder of the slaves, as well as taking prisoners of the mulattos who fought against them and their commandant, Van der Grijp.

Tula planned the battle strategy, which lasted for months and employed guerilla warfare. The first decisive battle was on August 19, when a Dutch force from the navy ship Medea under Lieutenant R.G. Plegher went to Portomari, where the rebellious slaves were encamped, and were soundly defeated.

It is reported that Tula was aware of the revolution that had resulted in freedom for slaves in Haiti. He argued since the Netherlands were now captured by the French, slaves in Curaçao should get their freedom as well. His three demands: an end to collective punishment, an end to labor on Sunday and the freedom to buy clothes and goods from others than their own masters.

Twice negotiations with the slaves took place with Father Jacobus Schink, a Franciscan priest, but when he reported back to Captain Baron Westerholt, heading the government's forces that the rebels wanted nothing less than freedom, the latter decided to get more reinforcements and attack. He ordered any slave with a weapon be shot.

In the ensuing fight, the rebels were defeated; ten to twenty of them were killed, and the rest escaped. Two months of guerilla warfare followed until Tula and Carpata were finally betrayed and captured. Tula was gruesomely tortured to death on October 3, 1795, in a public ceremony, and Carpata and Mercier executed. At its height, the rebel army had accumulated 1,000 followers. A monument to Tula and his fellow rebels stands at Rif, on the south coast of Curaçao, in the very spot where their heads were put on stakes as a warning to the whole population.

The Dutch text regarding the uprising is based on two speeches by Do Rego and a former Prime Minister of the Netherlands Antilles, Domenico Felip (Don) Martina. The English book is titled, "Slavery and Resistance in Curaçao," and was co-written with Lionel Janga. Both books will be on sale during the presentation, and Charles do Rego will be present to inscribe them.